

WASHINGTON POST
AND TIMES HERALD

MAY 11 1964

France Plans 5 A-Power Plants

By Howard Simons

The Washington Post Foreign Service

LONDON, May 9—France plans to announce soon a major civilian nuclear-power program that will more than double the amount of electricity the French are getting

from the atom, it was learned here.

Informed sources said the French intended to begin construction of five large atomic power stations over the next five years. Each of these will generate 500 megawatts of electricity, only somewhat less

than the biggest and newest American power stations now being built.

The French have apparently decided to install the same type of power reactor in each of the new stations—a French-developed, natural uranium, gas-cooled unit.

Confident on Cost-Cutting

By employing this sort of mass-production concept, French nuclear experts are said to be confident they can lower the cost of their reactors to make the atomic power stations competitive with stations run on regular fuels.

This single-reactor concept is essentially the approach the British have followed and is what distinguishes the British-French programs from that in the United States, where the Atomic Energy Commission has been developing a variety of different power reactors.

Experts familiar with the French plans do not know where the new stations will be located but note there has been talk of putting one or more in Brittany, which is France's Appalachia.

British to Lift Output

Britain recently announced a program to double its nuclear-power output during the next decade. But the British decided to defer for a year a decision on whether to install British-developed gas-cooled reactors or American water-cooled reactors.

In recent months, General Electric and Westinghouse have been making attractive commercial offers to the Europeans to sell them huge, 1000-megawatt, enriched-uranium, water-cooled atomic power plants.

These offers have whetted nuclear appetites in Britain and in Germany but apparently have failed to stir the

French. Instead, the French have been trying—without success—to sell their brand of natural-uranium, gas-cooled reactors to other nations and, this week, chided the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) for following in United States footsteps and failing to develop a strictly European nuclear technology.

Common Market's Sister

Euratom is a sister agency of the Common Market. Its membership is comprised of Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, West Germany and France, the strongest in nuclear power of the six.

The French have called upon Euratom to increase its efforts to develop natural-uranium and heavy-water reactors. These are two areas in which the French have intensive interest and research programs.

One official suggested that what the French were really telling their fellow Euratom members was that it was time for Euratom to follow in French footsteps.